

**Western Washington University Associated Students
Legislative Affairs Council
Thursday, November 12, 2015 VU 567**

Present: Patrick Eckroth (ASVP for Governmental Affairs), Josie Ellison, McKenzie Dent, Bridget Doyle Williams, Sarah Berglin,

Absent: Nora Selander
Advisor: Lisa Rosenberg
Secretary: Bryce Hammer
Guest: Henry Pollet

MOTIONS

LAC-15-F-18 Motion to Approve the Dedicated Revenue for Higher Education. **Passed.**
LAC-15-F-19 Motion to Adjourn. **Passed.**

Patrick Eckroth, Chair of Legislative Affairs Council, called the meeting to order at 4:22pm.

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. REVISIONS TO THE AGENDA

A. Patrick announced that the council would not be looking at the Rules of Operation because the ESC position hadn't been filled.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. *Postponed to next week.*

IV. INFORMATION ITEMS

A. Student Success Agenda Proposal—Patrick

Patrick said the council will be looking at four proposals this year, one of which is the Student Success proposal. It is similar to the one used last year and the university is also lobbying for parts of it. Josie said the admin agenda includes an item that is similar to the one they brought last year. The main thing the AS's agenda has in common with the admin agenda is the increase support for counseling services, which includes academic advising, increased disability services, and mental health counseling. The main differences is the AS's includes an item about support for homeless students. The council's also focuses more intensely on aid for students of color, especially in counseling. Patrick said that our academic advising ratio is double what it should be as are our disability advisors. Patrick said our counseling center is overwhelmed and it's not accessible to students. LAC wants actual staff for academic advising and more students hired at the tutoring center. Patrick met with Leonard Jones, the

Director of University Residences, and Emma Palumbo, the Vice President of Student Life, to talk about support for homeless students. They want transition housing for students that are circumstantially homeless, as in students that don't have a place to sleep because they have a house fire or were kicked out of their houses, etc. LAC is trying to get the conversation moved towards students that are homeless due to economic status. Patrick asked for questions. Josie reminded everyone that info items will be seen next week and they have a week to edit them. Patrick said the council should read through them before the action week.

B. Support for Survivors—Bridget, Josie

Bridget said this agenda item is designed to increase funding for sexual assault victims and domestic violence survivors. They want more support from the university in general but specifically they want increased funding for counseling services. This item is particularly important because of Title IX charges that are currently being brought against the school. Josie said they're also trying to widen communication channels between survivors and the administration so people who are dealing with this experience don't also have to worry about the stresses of being a student. Patrick asked if anyone had questions or wanted to move the item to action. No one did.

C. VOTE Proposal—Josie

Josie said that Nora did a lot of work on this proposal, thought she could not make it to this meeting. The first item on the proposal is Motor Voter registration that would automatically register teenagers to vote when they got their licenses. Getting young people to vote makes them more likely to stay involved in the voting process throughout their lives so this one is important. Next one is a bill that would require landlords to provide new tenants with voter registration upon moving in. Voting Rights Act is large but it works to ensure that at the county level districts are representative of the people they're trying to represent. It came out of a case in Yakima that was suppressing Latino voters. Another perk of passing this is they wouldn't have to go through a federal court process if a county ever wanted to sue. The next is extending the voter registration deadline. It would extend the deadline to 11 days prior to Election Day and it would allow you to register in person on the day of voting. This is important for Western because the quarter system doesn't allow the school to register as many people as it could. Next is access for voters with disabilities. People could sign an affidavit once and then be able to use a signature stamp so they don't have to go through a long drawn out process to vote. The last is requiring the ballots to have prepaid postage, in essence this would remove the poll tax. McKenzie asked is the landlord voter registration one could be done at a city level, Josie said it could. McKenzie said now would be a good time to do that. If it passes at the state level it wouldn't be a big deal to implement it at a city level but it might help in lobbying efforts. Briana said when she did her voting for King County, she printed her ballot online and they give you free postage. She wanted to know if there was a way to do that for all of the counties. Josie said that it differs county by county, King does but Whatcom, Pierce, and Spokane don't. McKenzie said

they should work on that with Whatcom County. Patrick asked for questions. There were none.

D. High School Civics Agenda Proposals—Josie

Josie said when they register students to vote at Western they get a lot of people who are new to civic engagement. Providing for civic education within the school system is important because it would increase the youth vote. They're looking at how to change the application of civics to public education. There are a couple of chances to fit this in with systems that already exist within the state. A part of this would be providing voter registration forms in schools. This could solve a lot of problems that Western faces and it could lead to a good cycle of legislatures being held accountable. McKenzie asked for ideas about who to talk to. Josie said the target is going to be some combination of the superintendent for public education and the head of the K-12 committee. Josie also said there are things at the federal level that would support this. There's a lot of good examples for this but nothing from Washington. WSA is also working on this problem. Lisa said that the secretary of state office would be a good ally to work with. Patrick asked for questions. There were none.

V. ACTION ITEMS

A. Dedicated Revenue for Higher Ed Proposals—Patrick

Josie said this is the third time the council has seen this proposal, they worked with Danny Edgel on it which is good because all of the goals are relatively doable in the current legislature. Josie then went through the proposals. The first item is taxing marijuana which normal goes into drug treatment and the general fund. They want to take the portion that goes into the general fund and make it larger, then from that general fund they want to portion that goes into education to put more towards higher education. This one is occasionally difficult because it means taking money away from other funds which isn't necessarily what they want to do. Next is lottery winnings, right now the WA state lottery makes 600 million per year. Half is given out as winnings. The next biggest chunk goes to the WA Opportunity Grant which creates the work study program and they want to increase the amount and also tax the lottery income. Next is closing the fuel exemption because it was created for refineries that burn wood so that they didn't have to pay taxes on the wood that ran their operations. Currently it is being used by five refineries in Washington. They're not the corporations that this loophole was created for but are using it anyways. This one would have a low impact, because there are only five refineries it would effect, but it would generate a lot of money. Next is the business and operations tax for R&D firms. It was supposed to expire, but it may have been labeled under a different title, Josie doesn't know what's happened to it. It's on the agenda in case if the loophole was not closed. Next is increasing the estate tax. They want to double the amount from 10-20% to 20-40%. Would affect very few people and would raise a lot of money. Then the first time mortgage lenders tax loophole, created for WaMu and needs to be closed because WaMu no longer exists. Originally designed to offer lower rates

to people who are getting money for their first homes. Josie said for the most part people don't think that cost will get passed on to people buying the homes. If it is then they can stop advocating for that tax. Real-estate excise tax exemption. Basically says when banks sell foreclosed homes they should also have to pay the tax that people have to pay when they sell homes. Last one is capital gains, tax on high end financial assets. Would only affect households that make over \$490,000 per year and would only be placed on gains over \$25,000. Could generate 800 million per year which could solve a lot of problems that the WA State Legislature has but it is less likely to pass than the others. Patrick asked if everyone has a good grip on this. Patrick brought up the 2016 State Legislative agenda. He showed the council the operating budget. Josie said our state leg is run on two year process and this year is a policy year so it will be hard to negotiate the budget. The state Supreme Court recently ruled on the McCleary decision so they'll have to change something but other than that it will be hard to negotiate the budget. Patrick reminded everyone that the more dedicated revenue they get for higher education the less other departments receive. Sarah asked if the estate tax will affect people who own assets that add up to 2 million even if they don't make that much, like farmers. Josie said estates only go into effect when people die, though it is different from the inheritance tax. A motion was made to approve the Dedicated Revenue for Higher Education Proposal.

MOTIONLAC-15-F-18 by Dearing

Second: Dent Vote: 5-0-1 Action: Passed.

The suggestions for the agenda will be taken to the Board of Directors and they will vote on them. He then brought up past year's agendas. Patrick said there are three components to the agenda. Cover page, actual agenda, and then a letter at the end. After the entire agenda is approved Viking Lobby Day will happen. He said they can start on the proposals now to take part and create the language. Lisa asked if Patrick meant the dedicated revenue proposal. Patrick said yes. Josie said there are other proposals that they will be working on. They won't be the primary focus but they will exist. They will be a little more technical and a little less literature. Josie said they've been working with the WA faculty who will be working on protecting the funding they got last year. The council didn't feel strongly enough about having a faculty bullet point on our agenda but they still want to work on it in Olympia. Patrick said that some of the bullet points have a start but if the issues are approved then Josie can lobby on them.

VI. REPORTS

- A. VP for Governmental Affairs: Patrick said there wasn't a Board meeting this week because of Veteran's Day. Other than that he's been working hard on Viking Lobby Day changes and getting things ready. He's got the buses and the hotel and will be starting on catering soon. He asked for people to help with the trainings for students. The WSA general assemble is on Saturday and there are

two empty seats if anyone wants to go. The west coast field organizer will be on campus next Monday and Tuesday. We'll get updated then.

- B. Legislative Liaison:** Josie met with Becca and Joe about lobbying for the school. They are working on meeting with Sarah Singleton who is the faculty representative from the faculty senate. There are two different faculties that are lobbying down in Olympia. The second faculty lobby team doesn't usually put their agenda together until pretty close to session. Other than that they're working on a lot of proposals and strategy charts.

- C. Local Liaison:** McKenzie said there was a city council meeting Monday, they were discussing a smoking ban on public parks and trails but they haven't made a decision yet. As far as election go everything but Prop 8 passed. It would have created space for independent candidates on the ballot. There are a couple that contradict each other. 2 & 3 directly contradict 10 and 1 & 9 might fit together but they're not supposed to, it looks like it will be district only voting but with five districts. She's been working on flat pages on the AS website.

- D. Western Votes!:** Nora was absent so Josie did the Western Votes report. Josie said there was a low-key meeting on Monday, going over votes and watching West Wing. Heading into next week they will be looking for a replacement for the communications coordinator.

Motion to adjourn the meeting made.

MOTION LAC- 15-F-19 by Ellison

Second: Dearing

Vote: 6-0-0

Action: Passed.

The Meeting was adjourned at 5:20pm